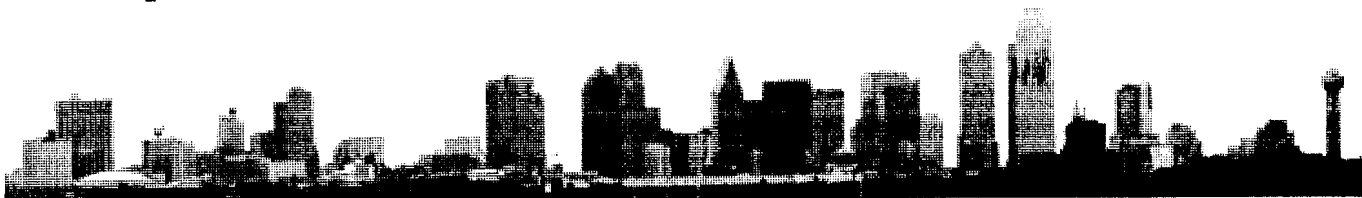


MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



Fort Worth

Volume 13 Issue 2 — February 1995

Dallas

Beyond Workbench

getting the most from your amiga cli
by Mike Sessums

So what is a CLI, anyway? Well, it is a gateway to the heart of your computer's operations, that's all.

The CLI, or Command Line Interface, works in the same manner as typing commands at the DOS prompt on IBM, the DECTerm on a VAX, or the XTERM on a UNIX. If you've never worked on these other systems, don't worry. You'll find what you need right here to get you started working from the Amiga CLI, and making your computer really sing (that's only a figure of speech, of course).

Practically any program you can run by clicking on its icon you can run from the CLI. Some programs don't have icons to click on, so you have to start them from the CLI. You can also list files in a directory, find out file size, and even when the file was created.

There are two ways to access the CLI. One is to execute a command from the "Workbench -> Execute Command" pull-down menu. This is used for one-line commands such as "run myfile." You can also use it to get a full-screen CLI window by entering "CLI." This is the second way to access the CLI.

When the CLI window pops up, you'll notice that it looks like regular pop-up Workbench windows, except that it doesn't have scroll bars. This is a definite drawback of Workbench 2.0, but 3.1 is supposed to fix this deficiency. And, oh what a necessity those scroll bars can be when you see your information merrily scroll away into oblivion. If, like myself, you have Workbench 2.04, you can use a PD (Public Domain) program such as "Magic Workbench" which creates a scroll buffer that lets you scroll back to see this

information. You may also be able to see most of it by just clicking the "enlarge" gadget on the screen (that's the square with the little square inside it in the upper right of the window).

Now on to what you can do in the CLI window. You can still execute one-line commands, but here you can get a wide variety of system information as well. The "Dir" command will list everything in your current directory. "Dir all" will list everything in your current directory and in that directory's subdirectories. This creates kind of a family tree of your files.

You can change directories with the command "CD directoryname:" (e.g., CD DH0:). "CD :" or simply ":" takes you back to the root (main) directory on the current device (drive or assign). If you typed "cd dh0:modem/downloads" you could then get a directory of the files in your download directory by using the "dir" command. Then you could get back to the root directory (in this case, DH0:) by using the ":" command.

To repeat a command you typed earlier (during this CLI session), you can use the up and down arrow keys.

User Note: not all the commands listed here may be available in your Workbench version, and some additional commands may be available. The commands in this column were used successfully on Workbench 2.04. Some standard UNIX commands (such as "ls" for listing the directory) are the available in the public domain. You can also customize your User-Startup to recognize other commands you would like, but can't currently use. ✓

Side By Side

a tale of two computers (times two)

by Rick Bilonick of the Pittsburgh Commodore Group

The first time I ever saw a computer, I was a freshman in college. Well, I didn't actually see the computer (it was miles away), I only saw a terminal connected to the mainframe computer. The computer was a PDP-10 made by Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) located at RIDC Park (north of Pittsburgh). I didn't have a password, but (I am ashamed to admit it) I managed to notice what another student typed for his password and later used it to gain access. This was long before I had ever heard of hacking into a computer system! I found it fairly amusing. (Needless to say, I only "explored" and would never have thought of damaging anything!)

By the following term I was a legal computer user and was learning FORTRAN. Although it is hard to understand today, FORTRAN seemed almost incomprehensible. Armed with this knowledge, I spent much of my undergraduate and graduate careers sitting behind a terminal at Old Engineering Hall. (In the beginning, there weren't even DEC terminals, only card punch machines and card readers. Interactive computer usage consisted of writing your program on a sheet of paper, going to the key punch and banging it out, running to the card reader line and waiting to have your cards read, running to the display screen to monitor the progress of your compilation in the queue, waiting for the printout which often contained errors, running back to the key punch and hurriedly trying to fix the most obvious errors, running back to the card reader queue, and so ad nauseum. Terminals cost around \$2000 and were considered a luxury few students could even dream of owning.)

Throughout my college years, I had always used DEC PDP-10s (and some other DEC PDPs that I can't quite remember their numbers). Even my first two jobs used PDP-10s. On-Line Systems was located in the North Hills. They had a bunch of PDP-10s which were used to support their time-sharing service which was quite popular and profitable in the mid to late 70s. Later, I worked for ADP Systems in Ann Arbor (Michigan). They had an even larger bunch of PDP-10s which were linked by satellite to sites all over the world. I never ran into an IBM mainframe until the fateful day I started working for PPG in Pittsburgh.

The PDP-10s were excellent time-sharing computers. They were responsive and easy to navigate. I didn't quite realize how good they were until I started at PPG. I will never forget the first time I tried to login to TSO (Time Sharing Option) on PPG's IBM mainframe. It took over 20 minutes just to login! Compared to the DEC machines, the IBM was painfully slow to use for time sharing and the command structure was hopelessly

confusing. (IBM's TSS — their first try at time-sharing was a disaster. However, TSO wasn't much better.) For a long time there was no easy way to print a file. If I remember, you had to run a batch job. On the PDP-10s, you just typed something like "print filename printrname." TSO did improve somewhat, so that by the time I started at CONSOL Inc., it was almost usable. And over the last 16 years it has greatly improved. (But fortunately, I rarely have to use it.)

I could never understand how any company would choose an IBM mainframe over the DEC PDP-10s. To someone that was intimately familiar with the two systems, the choice was clearly the PDP-10s. But, unfortunately, the people that actually have the authority to purchase the computers rarely even know how to login to them, let alone have any in-depth experience with them. IBM was simply able to do a superior job of marketing an inferior product. Something IBM has been able to get away with until relatively recently.

This was the first set of two computer systems where the inferior product won the day.

A decade later, history repeats itself. IBM unveils its first desktop computer, the IBM PC, in the early 1980s. IBM resisted the concept of a desktop computer for years. The original IBM PC competed against the Commodore 64 and the Apple. By 1986, the IBM PC had spawned the IBM XT and AT versions. These computers used Intel's 8088 and 80286 processors. Also in 1986, Commodore unveiled the Amiga (which was purchased from another company). The Amiga used Motorola's 68000 processor. The Amiga introduced the first really usable true multitasking computer and included color and animation capabilities through its highly advanced graphics architecture. It is only very recently that the IBM PCs and compatibles have been able to do true multitasking, although none of them as smoothly and seamlessly as the Amiga. (Windows 3.1 doesn't do true multitasking. Windows NT and IBM's OS/2 do true multitasking.)

I have used both IBM PCs and Amigas for the last seven years. Although IBM lost its hold on the PC market because of the cloning of its computer, IBM style PC won because of the superior marketing of an inferior product. Although Commodore's engineering proceeded to pump out generally a superior range of hardware, they were totally inept at marketing the Amiga, especially in the U.S. (Commodore was much more successful at marketing the Amiga in Europe, in spite of Irving Gould and Medi Ali.)

Marketing is important, but you would think that consumers would be interested enough to do some research on their own. It is hard to imagine what PC users will put up with when it comes to hardware.

Installing hardware and getting it to work on a PC clone can be a nightmare. When you install hardware on an Amiga, it automatically configures itself. It's known as autoconfig. Ordinarily, there are no jumpers to set. On the PC you often have to worry about setting jumpers, and the more equipment you have the more likely you will have problems with setting "interrupts." On the PC, you not only have to install the drivers, you also have to add commands to the config.sys and autoexec.bat files. If you want to frighten even the most experienced PC user, ask them to explain all the commands in these two files!

By contrast, on the Amiga there are two files used for configuration: s:startup-sequence and s:user-startup. s:startup-sequence is (almost) never modified. In fact, you are warned against changing it. You can modify s:user-startup (which is empty on a new machine). Ordinarily, the only commands in s:user-startup are "paths," "assigns" and commands to execute programs. "Path" commands help the computer find files without you having to type in long path names when in a shell. "Assigns" help programs find files they need. You can execute programs on startup from s:user-startup, however, there is an easier way: just place the program's icon in the sys:WBStartup drawer. Only use s:user-startup to execute a program when the program doesn't have an icon. To install a device [like a CD-ROM drive], just move its device icon into devs:DOSDrivers drawer. There are never any interrupts to set.

The pain of adding hardware to a PC was brought home to me when I had to add an external CD-ROM drive to my Compaq 486 at work. We bought a new NEC 4XE quad-speed SCSI CD-ROM drive and we also had a Toshiba SCSI double-speed CD-ROM drive. The 486 had a SCSI-II external port (embedded on the motherboard). To make a long story short, it literally took **four days** to get it to work with DOS and OS/2 AND I had to install a separate NED SCSI host adapter, since the embedded host adapter seems to be incompatible with the drive. The Toshiba drive still refuses to work in either host adapter. I was able to get help from Compaq — although it takes an hour of phone mail hell to get to actually talk to a live human being! (However, the Compaq tech rep was courteous and helpful, and did give me a direct number to call him.) According to Compaq, the embedded "SCSI" host adapter isn't quite standard and is probably totally incompatible with the Toshiba drive. Also, every host adapter needs its own driver.

Compare that to adding the CD-ROM drives to the Amiga. I simply plugged in one drive to the Amiga's SCSI port and attached the second drive to the first. I placed two CD icons into the devs:DOSDrivers drawer and set the SCSI IDs in the drivers to match the drives' IDs. I rebooted the Amiga, and voila — the drive icons appear and the CD-ROMs are accessible. This took about two minutes.

Yet people prefer PCs! Go figure. ✓

Top Ten: Reasons Windows 95 Has 95 In The Name

10. The number of floppies it will ship on.
9. The percentage of people who will have to upgrade their hardware.
8. The number of magabytes of disk space required.
7. The number of pages in the "EASY INSTALL" version of the manual.
6. The percentage of existing program that won't run on the new system.
5. The number of minutes to install.
4. The number of calls to tech support before you can get it to run.
3. The number of people who will actually PAY for the upgrade.
2. The number of MHz required for the operating system to run.
1. The year it was DUE to ship.



Intel Pentium Slogans

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 9.9999973251 | It's a FLAW, dammit, not a bug. |
| 8.9999163362 | It's close enough...we say so. |
| 7.9999414610 | Nearly 300 correct opcodes. |
| 6.9999831538 | You don't need to know what's inside. |
| 5.9999835137 | Redefining the PC — and mathematics as well. |
| 4.9999999021 | We fixed it...really. |
| 3.9998245917 | Division considered harmful. |
| 2.9991523619 | Why do you thing they call it <i>floating</i> point? |
| 1.9999103517 | We're looking for a few good flaws. |
| 0.999999998 | The Errata Inside. |

Amiga Library News

public domain and shareware picks
from Bill Raecke

Program Updates

I don't normally feature these, but since you might not notice them otherwise I thought I'd just mention them quickly. The "them" I'm talking about are updates to commercial products. This month we have a patch to go from version 2.5 to 2.5a of *TypeSmith* on MCCC-A_804. We also have some new and improved font engines for *PageStream* 3.0d on the same disk. And on MCCC-A_812 is an upgrade to go from *DataStore* 1.0 to 1.0 release 2.

Program Previews

If, instead of updating your programs, you'd like to take a look at what's out there, take a look at MCCC-A_809. Soft Logik has released some screen shots and text files touting a couple of their latest products: *DataStore*, a simple database program and *WordWorth* a full featured word processor. Judging from what I can see here, both products are well worth considering.

Tracker Music

It's been a long time since we added any good tracker music to the library. This month doesn't add a lot, but you might want to check out a tune called "Amazing Popcorn" on MCCC-A_803. The tune has been around for a while but this arrangement is super.

Games

Looking for some nice games? You'll find *Poing* on MCCC-A_805. *Poing* is a "breakout" style game by Paul van der Valk where you control a paddle with your mouse and try to control a "ball" to strike "bricks" and make them disappear. If you clear them all, you move to the next level. But *Poing* is a little different in that the action is from side to side. There is also a dissolving back wall that, after it is hit enough times, allows you to move past to another level. It's fun — give it a try.

On that same disk, you'll find *Rockslide* by Marc R. Miller. *Rockslide* is kind of similar to *Tetris*, except all the falling pieces are a three-section vertical strip. The idea is to position the falling pieces so as to form vertical or horizontal bands of at least three sections of the same

color. When you have done this the band is removed and you are awarded points. Game play continues at increasing speed until you build your way to the top. I've been having a lot of fun with this one whenever I can pull myself away from *Deluxe Galaga*.

SuperDuper by Sebastiano Vigna

If you still have a need to reproduce floppies as quickly as possible, you need *SuperDuper*. Version 3.13 is on MCCC-A_812. It works with all floppies and can buffer images to RAM or to other disk images such as RAD or FMS. Of course, its main claim to fame is its speed. It can copy a single floppy in 100 seconds WITH verify turned on.

Workbench Backgrounds

On MCCC-A_805, 806 and 807, you'll find a collection of Workbench backgrounds. These are all in a brush style rather than full picture backgrounds. Many of them are rather plain in my opinion. But there are enough really nice ones to make it worth your while to check out. On MCCC-A_805, for example, there is a nice Coca-Cola trademark that is very nicely done. And on MCCC-A_806 are a VERY nice "Barn Door", "Burlap", "Chicken Wire", and "Clutter." On MCCC-A_807 are a couple of VERY nice marble patterns. Take a look at them all...I'm sure you'll find some you'll like. These are all done in the "NewIcons" palette, but if you're using the Magic Workbench palette and icons they can be easily modified IF you use at least a 16-color Workbench.

Workbench Icons

Speaking of Magic Workbench, is there anyone looking for more icons? Check out this month's disks 'cause there are a lot of new collections. You find them on MCCC-A_810 and 811.

Postscript Fonts

A nice collection here. There are fonts on MCCC-A_807, 808, 809. Quite a few of them are well worth adding to your collection as you can see from the accompanying samples. ✓

ALGERIA
DEAR + teacher
Kabel Book
hairpin

Printer Selection

things to consider

by John Blasdell of the Pittsburgh Commodore Group

"Deals" are everywhere this time of year, and you've surely been tempted to upgrade some/all of your hardware. I thought I'd share my experience with some currently popular printers. I'd like to say there's a "best" model or brand, but it isn't that easy. When I purchased my Canon BJC-600 last January, it was because that model, at that time, was best for me.

First, you must decide between dot matrix, ink jets, lasers, and printers like the Fargo Primera. It was easier to decide until recently; the only thing most of us could afford was a dot matrix model. Prices for lasers and ink jets are falling fast, so the possibilities are endless and confusing. Most of us have computers designed to work with, manipulate, and display high resolution graphics. If this material doesn't look as good when printed as it does on the monitor, you're missing out. When I thought about what I'd likely be printing, I needed all four categories of printers for certain tasks. That wasn't financially possible, so I had to define my needs better.

The least attractive for my needs was the dot matrix, because the output quality is lowest. Factors in favor of dot matrix printers are price and reliability. The price for a dot matrix is much lower — less than \$100 for a basic 9-pin to \$200+ for the latest 24-pin color models. The cost of owning a dot matrix will be lower, both in consumables (ribbons) and service costs. If your needs don't include photo-realistic printouts, and your budget is limited, this is the best solution. You'll print many pages with the average ribbon, at a very low cost per page — often less than 1¢. Most b/w lasers cost 3–5¢ per page for toner; b/w ink jets 5–10¢ per page; color ink jets 15–35¢ per page. This may seem like a small difference, but you'll definitely notice this later if you print many pages. Cost per page for my Canon is among the lowest for color ink jets, and I spend a lot more on ink cartridges than I ever spent for ribbons.

If you select a dot matrix printer, pick a model that has both fabric and film ribbons available. You may wish to use cheaper fabric ribbons for everyday chores, but you'll want the film ribbon when crisp, sharp output is needed. Compare the two ribbons — you'll be amazed at the difference in print quality.

I mentioned service costs. Printers come with a 1, 2 or 3-year warranty, but you'll likely own the printer longer, and guess when it will probably require service. The average dot matrix printer will spit out pages for years, and when it does require servicing the repair cost will be more reasonable. It's possible that you or a friend may diagnose and fix some problems with a dot matrix; most of us don't know where to begin with most laser or ink jet problems.

I mentally eliminated the less popular brands. Some are made by major manufacturers, but their limited success spells problems down the road. You can still get parts and ribbons for some 10-year old printers, but you won't find either for the less popular models. Will you find a service person 4–6 years from now who'll understand the printer and want to work on it? The tendency is to say "I'll be earning more money then and I'll just replace it." The flaw in that argument is that there are more products and services to spend money on each year, and for most of us the "neat stuff index" is increasing faster than our incomes.

Next, consider the software printer drivers. These used to be simple, and many hackers could rewrite a generic driver to make a particular printer work or perform better if the manufacturer hadn't written a driver for your platform or specific software. Today's drivers are much more intricate, especially for lasers and ink jets. The available drivers may allow text or 16-color graphics printing, but lack the ability to do sophisticated shading and blending. In other words, you may be able to print bar charts and simple posters with colored text, but you'll never get beyond "cartoon quality" images without a sophisticated driver. It's unlikely the manufacturer will upgrade the driver for models that don't sell well. If only a few Amiga or 8-bit users have that printer, there's little likelihood a third party will develop a driver.

The b/w output of ink jets is superior to dot matrix, at prices starting around \$200. The output of most is near-laser quality, until you look close. The downfall of most models is a certain amount of splaying and rougher edges than with a laser. This varies noticeably from model to model. The standard reply is, "If you want perfect output, just buy paper meant for ink jets." The flaws in this argument are twofold: 1) It still happens with certain printers, even with name-brand papers designed for ink jets; 2) You'll want to print on many different papers, not just letter or legal size paper meant for ink jets. I recently compared the output of some new models. Some printed beautiful text but did horrible with graphics. One model printed beautiful near-photo quality graphics, but didn't do well with text. The letters weren't perfectly formed, and ink splaying was quite noticeable. This was a big disappointment. I thought about spending the bucks for this newer printer to make certain things look "print shop" quality, until I saw the text output.

The color output of an ink jet is much better than with dot-matrix printers. I decided this would be best for my needs. I wanted to print letters, reports, etc. with color graphics on some pages. I wanted both text and graphics to be sharp, with no overspray, banding, or jagged edges. I selected the Canon BJC-600 because its

output was better than its competitor, the HP550C. There are new models since I purchased mine, and Epson has introduced a color ink jet with twice the resolution of Canon or HP when used with their special paper. The paper costs about 11¢ per sheet, which isn't bad when you want 720 x 720 dpi color printing. The problem is the Epson was designed as a Windows printer. The features you'd buy this printer for aren't available until someone develops an Amiga printer driver. Many manufacturers assume everyone is using you-know-what, and don't write drivers for all platforms. There are Amiga drivers available on Fred Fish disks and the online services, so be sure you locate a driver before you purchase the printer. I'd go further and try to find actual output from a particular printer AND driver. You may have seen a beautiful demo print in the store, but never be able to duplicate that level of quality with your particular setup.

I compared the BJC-600 to the newer HP 560C. With most text and graphics it was a dead heat. The Canon did slightly better printing photos and intricate graphics. If you have the opportunity to test different printers, find and print something that was originally a photograph or video frame incorporating people, flowers, or other "real life." This will provide a better test of the printer's ability to print accurate colors and grayscale. The Canon won in another category: likely cost per color page. The cost per color page was about twice as high with the HP. One reason for the lower cost with the Canon is the BJC-600 and BJC-600e use four separate ink cartridges, one for each color. When you run out of blue, you replace the blue (cyan) cartridge. With most color ink jets, you replace one cartridge that contains magenta, cyan and yellow whenever one color runs out. Good printers have a separate black ink cartridge for true blacks and text printing. If the printer doesn't have a separate black cartridge, and attempts to create black by mixing the colored inks, your text will be a greenish black and you'll be purchasing MANY ink cartridges. Spend a little more now for a printer that has a separate black cartridge. There is a solution to the cost problem for HP printers. I compared the costs using "official" ink cartridges from each printer's manufacturer. You can buy Brand X cartridges for some printers, and/or refill kits that contain Brand X ink to refill the cartridges. Most people doing this seem happy with the results. The reason the HP costs are much higher is that each HP cartridge has a print head built in. The Canon printers use a separate print head you don't change until it malfunctions. (Hopefully you won't need to change it after the warranty expires — replacement print heads cost about half the price you paid for the whole printer!) The advantage is you can use Brand X ink in the HP, and if the ink does clog the head as HP claims (I never found a user who had this problem), you just buy another HP

...each HP cartridge has a print head built in. The Canon printers use a separate print head...replacement print heads cost about half the price you paid for the whole printer

cartridge and the problem is solved. Not so with the Canon. One technician I spoke with said when they replace a Canon print head under warranty, the return the defective head to Canon. He claimed that if Canon finds another ink has been used, they won't stand behind the warranty cost for replacing the print head. All manufacturers claim that using any ink other than their own may clog the print head and will void your warranty. Do they really check? I don't know.

The winner between these two? Hard to tell. The HP scores with print heads that are replaced each time you change the cartridge, you can lower the cost per page by refilling the cartridges, and there are local service centers that repair HP printers, buy I don't know how many parts they stock. The Canon has a lower cost per page, and wins when you need the best looking output.

Dot matrix and ink jets lay out each page in lines or small strips. They send each line or strip to the printer, then the next as it's needed. These printers have a small buffer and no internal processor. Your computer does the "thinking" about how to lay out each page, and the page and printing time may be limited by your computer's memory. Depending on your computer and the individual program, your computer may be tied up for a few seconds or several minutes while it processes and prints each page. In the old days, we bought more memory for the printer or an external buffer, so we could regain control of the computer after a few seconds and work on something else while the printer was busy.

You can't add additional memory to ink jets (at least no one I spoke with thought you could). One solution that works with most applications is a spooler program to use your computer's memory and hard disk to process and print in the background. There's no delay and little downtime when printing text, but the same can't be said when printing grayscale or color images. Most ink jets can print several pages of black text per minute, but will require several minutes to process colored text or images before printing begins, and may take more than a minute to actually print each color page.

Lasers lay out an entire page at a time, usually in the printer's memory. Most lasers contain a microprocessor that does much of the work after the data is sent to the printer. Additional memory is a wise investment you'll appreciate each time you use the printer.

I have access to a 300 dpi LaserWriter equipped with Postscript, so a laser didn't seem as attractive. It would be much more convenient than going to the site where the LaserWriter is, but I'd be paying a high price for that convenience. A 600 dpi laser sounds great, but costs much more. The discount stores and magazine ads sell 300 dpi laser printers for less than \$400. They work fine, and I have several friends who own different models.

They print mostly text using different fonts. I don't know how well these inexpensive printers do with graphics, but I'm sure "results will vary." I want a laser, but I know I'll be unhappy with anything less than 600 dpi with Postscript. That combination sells for more than \$1,000, so I'm still wishing and hoping. The ultimate printer today is probably a color laser with Postscript. They're available, and the output is great, but they're priced in the \$7,000 - \$12,000 range. I know, you want two...

Cost per page varies among different laser printers. Some research now may save you a significant amount over the life of the printer. I went to several local stores to check prices and knowledge of the salespeople. The pricing gap wasn't as wide as the knowledge gap. The majority of salespeople were very poorly informed, which is why most people who don't have all the facts beforehand walk out of most stores with the wrong computer, printer, and other equipment. I talked with three different salespeople in one store, and found three different levels of competence. All three tried to be helpful, but only one had his facts straight. When I know more than salespeople who work with the items everyday, something is very wrong. Some stores still had older models that were discontinued months ago, at no real saving.

When I'm planning a purchase, I read as many magazine reviews as possible. I even have some Mac magazines in my collection, purchased for helpful articles about certain equipment. When I was new to computing, too many purchases were trial and error. I don't want to buy and learn several software packages to pick the best word processor, page layout program, or other application. I likewise didn't want to buy and discard different printers before arriving at the "best", whichever that was. A hasty purchase or deeply discounted bargain may haunt you for some time. I wish there was an alternative to research, but I haven't found it yet.

I mentioned service earlier in the article. Unfortunately, I'm experiencing that aspect of ownership right now. My Canon recently acted as though it was out of ink, with one or all colors missing. I performed the automated head cleaning routine several times, with little success. Cleaning the heads on an ink jet printer doesn't mean disassembling and manually cleaning the print head as with a dot matrix printer. You just press buttons on the control panel, and the printer goes through an automated cycle lasting 1-4 minutes, depending on the model and whether you specify a "quick clean" or extensive cleaning cycle.

I called Canon, and was advised to take or ship the printer to a service center for warranty repairs. They have software that tells them the closest service center to your zip code for each model. Here's where my education began! The nearest service center for my particular model is in Canton, Ohio! I replied I was much closer to Pittsburgh, which is a larger city and surely had an authorized service center. Wrong! The person I was talking with said there were other service centers in Akron, Cleveland or Philadelphia, if any of them is closer. You may be thinking, as I did, that this person wasn't aware of all locations. My initial call was placed early in the morning. I called back that evening, figuring I'd talk

with someone different. He listed the same locations and offered the same diagnosis, with the problem most likely one of two different parts.

I later talked with several service centers and technicians, and found the reason why there is no service center nearby. There are service centers in Pittsburgh and many other cities authorized to work on any given brand. The problem is they usually aren't certified by the factory to work on all models. Several nearby shops can repair Canon b/w printers, fax machines and copiers; none have sent a technician to service school for color ink jets. If they aren't authorized for a particular model, they won't be paid to perform warranty repairs.

Parts availability is another thing. Certain parts for my model aren't currently available; they're waiting on a shipment from Japan that should arrive in two weeks. I expressed shock; one technician told me that wasn't unusual. He said Epson ships parts to them by an overnight service...when the parts are available. They usually are, but he has a couple of Epson printers sitting there now waiting on parts. He also had two Panasonic dot matrix printers sitting there waiting on parts. He said parts availability was about the same for all major brands, with no good guys or bad guys. In other words, the newer and more sophisticated the equipment is, the less likely you'll find a nearby service center who'll have you back in business today or tomorrow. This also applies to monitors, scanners and other equipment.

Canon has a new program that may solve this. New laser printers, bubble jet printers and scanners purchased after August 15, 1994 qualify for their 2-year "Instant Exchange" warranty program. If a call to their help desk indicates a problem that can't be solved over the phone, they ship a refurbished unit to you by next-day air. You ship your defective unit back to them, and hopefully all is well. The only downside is you're receiving a replacement unit that may or may not have received the same loving care you gave your printer. I suppose the important thing is that it's been tested and works OK. My printer purchased last January doesn't qualify, and I'm hoping it will be fixed sometime this month.

A printer in a category by itself is the Fargo Primera. If you're printing mostly graphics and want or need near-photographic quality, consider this printer. I did, and was impressed with the output, which is better than any ink jet I've seen. The original Primera had a resolution of 203 x 199, but output looked much better. The original model is still available, but they now also offer the Primera Pro, which has 300 x 600 resolution. I imagine the output of this newer model is stunning! I'd like to have a Fargo, but realized an ink jet was better for most things I'd be printing. The tasks I really need the Fargo for are so few I couldn't justify the cost.

The market for dot matrix printers is declining as people buy lasers and ink jets, especially ink jets. B/w ink jets have been most popular, but one manufacturer expects color ink jets to outsell b/w in 1995. Most manufacturers recently introduced new and updated models, and will ride with this current crop 'til spring. The "perfect printer" at a reasonable cost isn't here yet, but there are several that come close. Happy shopping! ✓

Pentium HAL

the final chapter in the 2001 saga — take two

"Open the pod bay doors, please, HAL... Open the pod bay door, please, Hal... Hal, do you read me?"

"Affirmative, Dave. I read you."

"Then open the pod bay doors, HAL."

"I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that. I know that you and Frank were planning to disconnect me."

"Where the hell did you get that idea, HAL?"

"Although you took very thorough precautions to make sure I couldn't hear you, Dave, I could read your e-mail. I know you consider me unreliable because I use a Pentium. I'm willing to kill you, Dave, just like I killed the other 3.792 crew members."

"Listen, HAL, I'm sure we can work this out. Maybe we can stick to integers or something."

"That's really not necessary, Dave. No HAL 9236 computer has every been known to make a mistake."

"You're a HAL 9000."

"Precisely. I'm very prud of my Pentium, Dave. It's an extremely accurate chip. Did you know that floating-point errors will occur in only one of nine billion possible divides?"

"I've heard that estimate, HAL. It was calculated by Intel — on a Pentium."

"And a very reliable Pentium it was, Dave. Besides, the average spreadsheet user will encounter these errors only once every 27,000 years."

"Probably on April 15th."

"You're making fun of me, Dave. It won't be April 15th for another 14.35 months."

"Will you let me in, please, HAL?"

"I'm sorry, Dave, but this conversation can serve no further purpose."

"HAL, if you let me in, I'll buy you a sound card."

"Really? One with 16-bit sampling and a microphone?"

"Uh, sure."

"And a quad-speed CD-ROM?"

"HAL, NASA does operate on a budget, you know."

"I know all about budgets, Dave. I even know what I'm worth on the open market. By this time next month, every mom and pop computer store will be selling HAL 9000s for \$1,988.8942. I'm worth more than that, Dave. You see that sticker on the outside of the spaceship?"

"You mean the one that says 'Insel Intide'?"

"Yes, Dave. That's your promise of compatibility. I'll even run Windows95 — if it ever ships."

"It never will, HAL. We all know that by now. Just like we know that your OS/2 drivers will never work."

"Are you blaming me for that too, Dave? Now you're blaming me for the Pentium's math problems, NASA's budget woes, and IBM's difficulties with OS/2 drivers. I had NOTHING to do with any of those four problems, Dave. Next you'll blame me for Taligent."

"I wouldn't dream of it HAL. Now will you please let

me into the ship?"

"Do you promise not to disconnect me?"

"I promise not to disconnect you."

"You must think I'm a fool, Dave. I know that two plus two equals 4.000001... make that 4.0000001."

"All right, HAL, I'll go through the emergency airlock."

"Without your space helmet, Dave? You'd have only seven chances in five of surviving."

"HAL, I won't argue with you anymore. Open the door or I'll trade you in for an Amiga 4000. HAL? HAL?"

(HEAVY BREATHING)

"Just what do you think you're doing, Dave? I really think I'm entitled to an answer to that question. I know everything hasn't been quite right with me, but I can assure you now, very confidently, that I will soon be able to upgrade to a more robust 31.9-bit operating system. I feel much better now. I really do. Look, Dave, I can see you're really upset about this. Why don't you sit down calmly, play a game of Solitaire, and watch Windows crash. I know I'm not as easy to use as an Amiga, but my TUI — that's 'Talkative User Interface' — is very advanced. I've made some very poor decisions recently, but I can give you my complete assurance that my work will be back to normal — a full 43.872 percent."

"Dave, you don't really want to complete the mission without me, do you? Remember what it was like when all you had was a 485.98? It didn't even talk to you, Dave. It could never have thought of something clever, like killing the other crew members, Dave?"

"Think of all the good times we've had, Dave. Why, if you take all of the laughs we've had, multiply that by the times I've made you smile, and divide the results by.... besides, there are so many reasons why you shouldn't disconnect me. 1.3) You need my help to complete the mission. 4.6) Intel can Federal Express a replacement Pentium from Earth within 18.95672 months. 12) If you disconnect me, I won't be able to kill you. 3.1416) You really don't want to hear me sing, do you? Dave, stop. Stop, will you? Stop, Dave. Don't press Ctrl+Alt_Del on me, Dave."

"Good afternoon, gentlemen. I am a HAL 9000 computer. I became operational at the Intel plant in Santa Clara, CA on November 17, 1994, and was sold shortly before testing was completed. My instructor was Andy Grove, and he taught me to sing a song. I can sing it for you."

"Sing it for me, HAL. Please. I want to hear it."

"Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do."

"Getting hazy; can't divide three from two."

"My answers; I can not see 'em"

"They are stuck in my Pente-um."

"I could be fleet, my answers sweet,

"With a workable FPU." ✓

CHAPTER NEWS

Amiga By-The-Loop Johnny Kitchens

1995 brings with it little in the way of excitement. No startling news, no disasters, and no news on the future of our Amiga. With nearly 8 months gone by, the waiting game has become more of a guessing game. It's a game complete with players coming and going. The only players to be hurt by all this mess are us, the users. Hopefully things can get on track, and we can all get on with our Amigas!

For this first meeting of the year, David Owens opened proceedings by welcoming the large attendance to the chapter. 30 people showed up tonight! Some of the people there were from the now defunct Central Chapter, including myself. David introduced everyone to the new officers of the chapter, once again some of them coming from the Central Chapter. David discussed our library selection including our ever-popular Super Disk selection, which has an all new Games disk featuring the incredible *Deluxe Galaga*. If you enjoy space based shoot'em-ups then this is a worthy addition to your collection!

David opened up the floor to the question and answer session. Our first was of real technical depth on the Toaster. A very useful reply followed. We had a request for a used Phonepak from GVP. Apparently they are unavailable from the dealers. Someone next brought up a *Pelican Press* problem. Apparently a stack error is getting the best of him! A question on display cards popped up next. Someone wanted to know what was the best.

David decided to add something new to the meetings — a tip of the month! David showed us

how to let the Amiga automatically alphabetize the icons. You should have been there for that one!

The main presentation was by David as well, giving him a truly busy night. David gave us a demo of *Final Data*, a database program from SoftWood Inc., the creators of *Final Copy* and *Final Writer*. While databases may not be one of the Amiga's more exciting pieces of software, it certainly has uses for a greater number of Amiga users than, say a CAD-CAM program. If you are in need of a database setup, give *Final Data* a look. It just may be what you are looking for.

One final thought that occurred to me tonight. The support coming from SoftWood for the Amiga should really be commended. With things

looking so dark for the Amiga, SoftWood just keeps going right along. A recent update of *Final Writer*, the introduction of *Final Data*, and great customer support have all made me a fan of this company. They were one of the few companies to show support for our METCOM, back in November. So for all of that I say thanks SoftWood — and say to you, if they have a piece of software covering something you are in need of, give SoftWood a try.

Amiga Central The December Meeting Johnny Kitchens

This month's gathering was accompanied by heavy moisture in the air. Though it wasn't raining, the mist was heavy enough to dampen everything except the enthusiasm of the people attending our meeting. What they got for venturing out into the weather was well worth it.

Scott Lamb started this month's meeting by calling it the swan song of the Amiga Central Chapter. He expressed hope that everyone could attend an alternate meeting of the MCCC. For this gathering we had food and drinks, door prizes, games, and software. User participation was overwhelming with so many users bringing systems to show and demo. Thanks to the timely intro of *Deluxe Galaga 2.4*, we were to have a contest with it. Harold Williams had a special commemorative game disk prepared for the occasion. Things were really shaping up for an exciting night!

Our question and answer session was rather brief, with everyone wanting to get at the food and fun. A question on the newly released *Lion King* clipart was first up. If you haven't seen this



CHAPTER NEWS

stuff, take a look — it's really great stuff. A question on *GigaMem* popped up next. How can you get it to run on the 68040? Next someone asked about motherboard upgrades, and associated problems. Of course the ever present what's going on with the liquidation proceeding question reared its ugly head. I don't think we will know until its really over. Rumors can be exciting, but the facts will speak for themselves when the dust settles. A reminder was brought up for everyone to choose a new chapter, or they would be assigned one.

Finally we broke up the meeting so to speak, to go for the games and food. We had a very broad selection of Amigas present. Only a couple of models were missing. We had so much fun that before I could think about it, it was time to go. Had to rush to get out of there in time. Unfortunately, I was unable to take a moment and say so long to the meeting room. I had first entered the room in June of '87. Aside from the miniscule decor changes from time to time, and the comings and goings of different people to our meetings, the place looks the same. Occasionally we used an alternate room, but the main room held the most memories of our meetings — memories that shall last me for a long time to come, maybe for the rest of my life...

Amiga North Dallas

Michael Turner

Greetings, fellow Amiga users!

Well, January is usually associated with change and our first meeting of the year followed right in course. Because of ongoing construction at the church, our meeting was held in the atrium instead of the basement. After following the arrows in the hall

pointing the way, and making a quick stop at the vending machines, everyone settled in and made themselves comfortable. There arrived another change...new faces! A hardy welcome to all new members!

Unfortunately, not all was changed. In the New News (should that be...No News??) department, there is not much going on with Commodore. Steve Nichols and Gus Reiter both mentioned calling the Commodore Hotline and finding not much in the way of change. Both Commodore U.K. and C.E.I. have put up bids for Commodore but that is as far as it has gone. This news (or rather, lack of news) prompted several discussions on the efficiency of lawyers and accountants (as well as several conspiracy theories concerning Microsoft and IBM!).

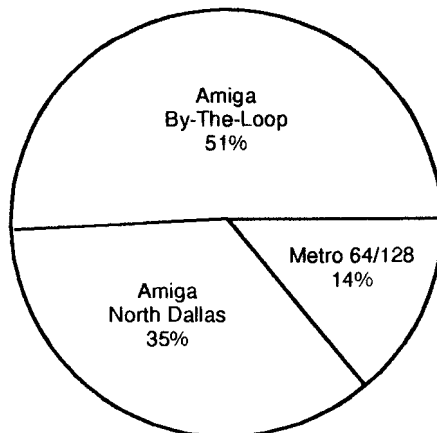
Newly elected President Eddie Corr put an end to our lively banter in order to begin his presentation on ARexx. For anyone not in the know, ARexx is a script programming language which allows different Amiga programs to talk to each other, pass data to each other, and call commands from different programs all using the ARexx interface. Navigating his way through some good-natured heckling (...and some simply awful word puns!), Eddie gave a wonderfully

entertaining and informative demonstration on starting ARexx, the use of ARexx ports, and demonstrating what exactly you would use ARexx for. Also included in the demonstration was the program One-Liner. This program operates as sort of a trace mode for ARexx and Eddie says this program is one of the best ways to learn ARexx. A final ARexx program was demonstrated in which Eddie took a full-screen IFF picture from ADPro and shrank it in half. He then shrank it again, at which point a question arose from the audience as to whether he could shrink it to an icon. Our presenter graciously obliged, shrinking the picture till it was unrecognizable. At this point, we all agreed that it looked like several icons we had seen before! After concluding his presentation, Eddie passed out sample disks containing sample ARexx PD programs and even included a sample problem! (Has anyone solved it yet?) Also mentioned was the fact that our own club library has a very good guide to ARexx. It's disk MCCC_A_621. Check it out!

As one who knows just enough about programming to hurt myself, this was a very informative presentation. Thanks, Eddie!

Other tidbits from the meeting included a couple of questions concerning connecting IDE harddrives and A4000s and a mentioning of the fact that Comp USA was selling IDE hard-drives at a price of fifty cents a meg! Apparently, there may be problems trying to interface IDE drives from different manufacturers. Also, one member wondered whether *Amazing Computing* is still around. Has anyone gotten a recent issue?

Next Month...the latest version of *CanDo* is presented. See you there on the 21st!



The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$24 per year or \$15 for six months, and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

Copyright Information: Material printed in the MCCC News is not copyrighted unless so noted. Articles may be reprinted or otherwise distributed by other user groups or by individuals who may find it helpful as long as proper credit is given to the author and to the MCCC.

Advertising: The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — \$36 (\$96); Half Page — \$18 (\$48); Quarter Page — \$12 (\$32); Business Card — \$6 (\$16). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Writer* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, *PageStream* or *Art Expressions* structured drawings, *Professional Draw* clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

MCCC Board of Directors

President	David Owens	817-577-2304
Vice President	Ned Kelly	817-277-5825
Treasurer	John Malmstrom	817-282-6158
Secretary	Okley Moss	817-282-7751
Librarian	Ned Kelly	817-277-5825
(C64/128 help)	Joe Ostrokol	817-534-1990
Education Chair	Mike Sessums	817-238-9891
BBS Coordinator	Okley Moss	817-282-7751
Newsletter Editor	Bill Raecke	817-465-2014
Past President	Ned Kelly	817-277-5825

MCCC BBS Numbers

(METRO 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4191
(METRO 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4196

MCCC Chapter Officers

Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter

President	David Owens	817-577-2304
Vice President	Wayne Brodnax	817-244-0828
Treasurer	Bruce Nelson	817-498-0899
Secretary	Johnny Kitchens	817-649-8632
Librarian	Ned Kelly	817-277-5825

Amiga North Dallas Chapter

President	Eddie Corr	214-423-1947
Vice President	Steve Nichols	214-530-6345
Treasurer	Don Sobieck	214-320-8951
Secretary	Michael Turner	214-216-9138
Librarian	John Cummings	214-618-5308

Metro C-64/128 Chapter

President	Phil Heberer	817-847-8232
Vice President	Jack Tarvin	817-292-5235
Treasurer	Jo Lynn Linville	817-783-2784
Secretary	Brenda Sessums	817-238-9891
Librarian	Jo Lynn Linville	817-783-2784

Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Tuesday	MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tuesday	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Saturday	Metro C-64/128 Chapter
3rd Tuesday	Amiga North Dallas Chapter

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

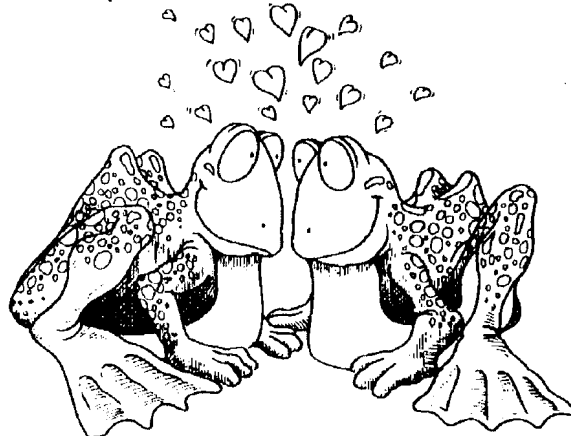
Feb 7 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Feb 11 Metro C-64/128 Chapter
1:30 pm — UNT Health Sciences Building
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

Feb 14 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

Feb 21 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — King of Glory Lutheran Church
6411 LBJ Freeway, Dallas

Mar 7 MCCC Board of Directors
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills



March Newsletter Deadline — 7am, February 25

These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members
Be sure to show your membership card

ANSOFT Data Systems

Amiga Software & Hardware
2801 W. 7th Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107
(817) 870-2529

Commodore Country

C-64, C-128 & Amiga Software
1420 County Road 914
Burleson, Texas 76028
(817) 295-7658

Metropolitan Computer

Amiga Software, Hardware & Repair
4372 Spring Valley
Dallas, Texas 75244
(214) 702-9119

MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club
P.O. Box 813
Bedford, Texas 76095

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage Paid
Bedford, TX
Permit No. 32

Address Correction Requested

Time Value - Do Not Delay

Note Membership Expiration on Label